

Thanksgiving

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[0 : 00] In John chapter 6, we read in verse 11, and then in verse 23, and then in verse 29. These three verses, which to an extent, I think, epitomise what we're seeking to recognise and be thankful for.

We read that Jesus himself, at verse 11, took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down. And likewise of the fishes, as much as they would. And in verse 23, there came other boats from Tiberias, now into the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks. And in verse 29, Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. We see in this passage how that which was small in terms of supply was multiplied, not only miraculously, but sufficiently for the needs of all, when our Lord himself took it and received it and gave thanks for it.

Now, of course, we are not wholly divine. We are wholly human, but we're not wholly divine as Jesus was. So we think, yeah, this is a miracle. Jesus is doing a miracle. Well, it says here in the text that it's a miracle, because the people perceived when they saw the miracle that Jesus did.

[1 : 29] Verse 14, he said, This is of a truth, the prophet, that should come into the world. And they're looking back to what Moses had prophesied in Deuteronomy 18, about a prophet like unto himself who would come, to whom they would hearken.

But what we do recognise here, that that which is received at the hand of God, and that he provides for us from whatever source, little as it may be when it is received with thanks, it is found perhaps miraculously, perhaps simply by the grace of God, it is found to be sufficient for all our needs.

And Jesus here sets us the example of thanksgiving for that which seems inadequate, which is found wondrously, in fact, to be adequate and sufficient, and then so.

Of course, the giving of thanks here by Jesus is not only setting example, it is also part of the act by which the provision is made sufficient.

The context here, as we read at the beginning of the chapter, is that Jesus has passed over the Sea of Galilee, the Sea of Tiberias, and he goes up into a mountain apart with his disciples.

[2 : 46] Now, Luke tells us in chapter 9, at verse 10, that he went, he took them window-side privately into a desert, that doesn't mean desert as in sand, as in Arabia, it means a deserted place, belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

And you'll notice, of course, that it is here, to this land, this grassy area, belonging to the city called Bethsaida, that Jesus turns and says to Philip, when shall we buy bread that these may eat?

And I think, well, why does he ask Philip? Well, if you go back to the beginning of John's account of the Gospel, you see in chapter 1, verse 44, it says that Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

So, in other words, they're on Philip's home turf, as well as Andrew and Peter's. So, Jesus turns to the boy whose home turf it is and said, where's the best place to get food? How are we going to get food for all these people?

Where are we going to buy food for all these people? I think it's sufficient that Jesus, or significant, that Jesus here says, when shall we buy bread that these may eat?

[3 : 48] How are we going to be able to afford bread for all these people? And Philip says, well, even if you could find the supply, 200 penny worth of bread, two-thirds of a year's wage for a labourer would not be sufficient, for that everyone may take a little.

I think it's significant, of course, that Jesus says, buy, because nothing is without cost. There's that phrase, as you know, there's no such thing as a free lunch, because somebody's paying for it somewhere.

If it's free to us, then somebody else is bearing the cost, whether it be the particular institution or body, which is supplying the complimentary lunch, or whether it's the government, or whether it's the taxpayer, or whatever it happens to be.

Somebody's picking up the tab somewhere. And when Jesus talks about buying bread, he may be initially testing Philip with a question about money, but also I would suggest to you that Jesus himself knows, and it says, of course, he knows what he intends to do.

Jesus himself knew that there was going to be a cost in making the food available to so many. Just as we read that when Jesus healed people, we read that virtue went out of him, strength went out of him, and there was a cost in the healing of those who were diseased or afflicted.

[5 : 16] So undoubtedly, there will be a cost in the use of divine power flowing out, as it were, from him to miraculously multiply that which seems to be, on the face of it, insufficient.

The disciples, of course, themselves have nothing. Andrew, who's another Bethsaida boy, of course, as it says in John 1.44, Simon Peter's brother said to him, there's a lad here, which have five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?

Why are they going to this wee boy with these five barley loaves and two fish? They're not going to do that if they say, well, actually, I've got something in the rucksack here, or the basket they would carry on the back. I've got a bit left over.

We've got a low fear. Thomas, you've got one some. Well, Matthias, he's got some too. So between three or four of us, we've got maybe half a dozen loaves. No, they don't have anything. They haven't got anything at all.

As I've mentioned in the past, part of the miracle and part of the compassion of what Jesus does is that the disciples who begin this event with nothing, so much so that they have to borrow off a wee boy for their five loaves and their two fish, they end up with sufficient of 12 baskets.

[6 : 31] And the word that's translated as basket here means like the sort of kind of little carrier basket that men would normally strap onto their backs and carry like a sort of rucksack thing where, you know, the day's supplies or immediate needs would be carried.

So each of them then, at the end of this miracle, has a full basket of bread to carry away with them when not one of them had anything before.

But that's an aside. Let's recognise here that what was insufficient before, indeed what had to be borrowed before, it wasn't theirs, it had to be received from somebody else.

When it is received with thanks, through Jesus, becomes sufficient for the needs of all. It becomes abundant for the needs of all.

So much so they have to leave 12 basketfuls of the broken pieces. They can't even gobble it all up, even though there's 5,000 men, plus the women and children.

[7 : 32] Women may not have come out in such numbers as men. Maybe there was two or three men for each woman that was out in the crowd at the time. So let's say just half as many again of women and children.

Even so at that comparatively modest, conservative estimate, that still makes about 7,500 people. 7,500 people, 5,000 men, and that's modest.

It's probably more than that. And they've all had sufficient, and they've all eaten till they're pug, till they're full, and there's these 12 baskets left over.

Which, in all fairness, sounds a lot, but when you think about all the broken pieces gathered up from 7,500 people, it's not that much left over.

It's almost an exact match of what's needed. You know, if you've got a piece of a loaf here and a piece of a loaf there gathered amongst what 7,500 people have eaten, then, you know, by the time you add it all together, well, what these little baskets men would carry on their backs, it's not actually that much from such a big gathering.

[8 : 42] So, in other words, what is required is matched almost exactly by what is provided through the intervention and the thanksgiving of Jesus.

Now, of course, as we said, we ourselves are not divine. But it is the case that all that we receive, we receive, not unlike with this wee boy here who provides five loads of education, we receive from other people.

Very few of us, if any of us, probably none of us, actually go out now and till the soil that will grow the food that we ourselves consume.

We may go out and catch some fish or shellfish or whatever and maybe use some of that and eat some of that, but that will be everything we eat. We will also go to the shops and we will get meat or oats or bread or whatever.

We may need cereal, fruit, vegetables, whatever it may be, which other people grew, other people raised, other people produced and it came to us from other people.

[9 : 46] And yes, there's a cost. There's a cost. We pay for it, but there's a cost to them in producing it as well. Where will we find sufficient to pay for all such? Well, the Lord by his grace has provided us with sufficient and it is incumbent upon those who know their dependence upon the Lord to receive all that we have, not to pretend we can get by in thin air.

We can't. You know, the Lord is, Paul, like Timothy, has given us all things richly to enjoy. He intends that we do receive the good things of this earth, but in doing so that we acknowledge that they don't originate with us.

Even if we do go and kill the soil and grow the crops and fish the sea and so on for all that we receive, it is God who puts it there. God who provides the harvest of the land and the harvest of the sea.

It is the Lord who gives it to us and it is used to the labor of other people as well as intermediaries who bring it to us. So there is cause for us to be thankful, to give thanks to the Lord and in giving thanks in all that we have, all that with which we stock our larders and our cupboards and our homes, all that we receive and it is abundance what we have.

It's such that only two or three generations ago they couldn't even dream about having so much food in the house as we have now. But it is becoming of us to give thanks and to recognize that when we are thankful to the Lord and recognize that what we might want is one thing but what we actually need is another.

[11 : 31] And when we are thankful to the Lord and humbled before him we have sufficient for all our needs. Because Jesus, remember, has compassion.

He has compassion not only on his disciples who don't have any food to share with them and to give or to give to these people but he also has compassion on the people themselves. He recognizes that they are flesh and blood.

That yes, they may be there to hear his teaching and to be helped by him and so on but also we are not just pure spirit and soul. We cannot just live on thin air.

We are flesh and blood. We have to eat. We need physical provision. And we read in Mark's account of the Gospel this incident, chapter 6, verse 34, For Jesus, when he came out, saw much people and was moved with compassion toward them because they were a sheep not having a shepherd and he began to teach them many things.

And then when the day was now far spent, at the end of the day, when people would normally have their main meal of the day in the evening, he said, this is a desert place, deserted place. Now the time is far past.

[12 : 42] Send them away to the disciples that they might go into the country round about and villages and buy themselves bread, but they have nothing to eat. He said, give ye them to eat. And they said, shall we go and buy over 200 penny worth of bread and give them to eat?

So it's the end of the day and they've got nothing and the disciples have got nothing. But Jesus has compassion on them. That's what moves them to ask, what have you got food-wise?

That's what moves them to give thanks that his Father has enabled such as there is, such little offerings there may be, to actually be used for this great miracle.

Matthew tells us, chapter 14, verse 14, Jesus went forth, saw a great multitude was moved with compassion toward them and he healed their sick. So he has a care for their afflictions and their bodies, not just for food, but for the need for healing as well.

And the body needs healing as well as the mind. God's desire is that when we use that word holy, it's not just in the sense of sacred and set apart, but it's the sense of the whole self being given to the Lord and the whole self being treated, as it were, by the Lord.

[13 : 58] It is whole, W-H-O-L-E, which gives that holistic treatment that the Lord desires to give, to provide for our bodies, but also to heal us of affliction, but above all to make whole our wounded soul, our soul that has this breach in it, this gap tooth missing section in it, because as long as the Lord is not there completing us, we are by definition incomplete and there are a few things so, so exasperating as that which is incomplete, whether it be our measure or our pastime, if you've got a jigsaw and one piece missing, or you've got a car that's working perfectly, there's something

clanking away and there's something that's incomplete, there's a missing nut or bolt, there's a missing shaft, there's a missing something, you can get by fine without it, but it's so exasperating because there is this inbuilt desire to just make it perfect, to make it complete, and as long as we go through our lives with our souls incomplete, there is always that yearning, there is always that missing piece, but just as the Lord when we are prepared to give over to them without grumbling, what little we may think we have left to ourselves, and that's what the Lord requires of us of course, is to give all up to him, it will never be enough to enrich his kingdom, never be enough to make him more glorious,

God is not concerned with adding to his own glory, with whatever little pathetic offering of ourselves we bring, he is concerned with how valuable is this to you, how valuable am I, the Lord, to you, and it is that we are prepared to give all to him, we have no suggestion that the little boy who gave his five loaves and his two fish actually had twelve in his pocket, but he only produced five and he kept seven for himself, no, there is no suggestion of that at all, no suggestion he actually had half a dozen more fish, but he just produced two of them, no, everything that he had he gave, and he probably thought he was giving it just to Jesus, but in fact Jesus intended it for everybody, and likewise we see, we back in the Old Testament of course, in the time of famine, verse 17, when Elijah comes to that poor widow of Zarephath, whom the Lord has set apart to feed him, we read in verse 13, Elijah said to fear not, go and do as thou hast said, but make me thereof a little cake first, this is of the little bit of meal she had left, and bring it unto me after, make for thee and for thy son, now, that's quite an ask, when she's only got enough left to bake a little cake of bread for herself and her son, and that will be the last meal they have, and then they'll die of starvation, so he said, from the little you've got, go and make for me first, the prophet of the Lord, and then eat yourselves, for thus saith the

Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth, do you act on that, do you trust him, or do you say, actually, no, I don't believe that, I'm just going to keep what little I've got, you keep what little you've got, and that's it gone, that's it spent, what you see is what you get, you put your trust, your faith in the Lord, and suddenly there is hope that there might be more than just what little pathetic amount you may have in your hands, a man's life does not consist in the things which he possesses, Jesus says, we look at our lives, sometimes, you know, when I'm doing the books and finances and so on, and plotting up, you know, this check's going out, and that one's coming in, and so on, and doing a wee ledger at home of the domestic finances, family finances, and you think, okay, well, towards the end of the month, there's not a huge amount left in the account, there's such and such an amount, and then something to stop and think to myself, if that was actually sitting on the desk in front of me, in notes and coins, it would look pathetic, the point is that as long as it's just numbers and a ledger in an account, then you can think, okay, the account's still in the black, that's good, that's great, however little may be the amount, not overdrawn, so that's good, that's great, but if you actually put the amount into your hand, in notes and coins, you think, is that a lot of got jinxed, that's almost nothing, and that's all we've got, until a paycheck, until next month comes in, oh my goodness, we're really struggling, no, you don't worry in these terms, but if you didn't focus, this is all we've got, if you reduce everything down to tangible pound, shillings, and pence, or the value of your possessions, you think, is that all

I've got in the world, and if we simply think in terms of tangible possessions, or physical money, or physical worth, then we would despair, because surely life is worth more than these things, our life, our soul, our future, has to be more than just these things, and it is, because here is the word from Elijah to the widow of Zarephath, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail, till the day the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth, take your life in your hand, walk by faith, not by sight, and see if the Lord does not multiply to you, not the riches of kings and palaces, but enough, for each day, by day, by day, until the emergency be passed, it came to pass, we read, after the, this is what happened, the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail, according to the word of the

Lord, which he spake by Elijah, she and her house and he did eat many days, as many as they needed, because it lasted, because the provision was there, because, undoubtedly, it was received with thanks, even that which, if you like, symbolised the pain and the suffering and the agony and the sacrifice that Jesus himself was about to make, think about what we read, of course, every time we have the Lord's supper, you know, Paul writes to the Corinthians, I have received of the Lord,

that which I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he break it and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me, Christ gave thanks for the very bread itself that symbolised his broken body, as we ought to give thanks for the fact that he gave himself for us, and if there was nothing else in this calendar year for which we are caused for gratitude, that in itself would be sufficient, that Christ has saved us, that he has given himself, his broken body, his shed blood, that we might be redeemed, that we might be saved, but the

[21 : 32] Lord knows that we are not just soul, the Lord knows we have flesh and blood and meat, the Lord knows we are human, we are yet in the flesh for as long as we're here on this earth, and so he provides, you see those who will receive the things that God has given, but don't accept that it's from God, they think well I have worked for this, I put in the time, I'm the one who's worked hard, and it's me that has earned these things, and it's because I'm so good at what I do, and because I've worked so hard, you know, it's Deuteronomy that reminds us and says, and that's way back, the depths of the Old Testament, that it is the Lord who gives you strength and ability to get wealth, it is the Lord who has given you the gifts and skills that make you good at your profession, it is the Lord who gives you the physical health and strength to go out and do your job, to bring in the income or the wage and to earn the pension at the end of it that provides for your needs now, it is the

Lord that gives and does all these things, and yet those who have not the Lord on their radar, it's said of course of one of the richest men in the world at the time, the Rockefellers of course, one of them when he was on his deathbed, said, you know, how much is enough money in this work, is reputed to have said just a little bit more, always just a little bit more, when we receive and keep taking in, without the Lord, without this thanksgiving, then all that we take in, it's somehow never enough, like the rich fool pulling down his barns and building bigger ones, it's never enough, and the Lord says, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be acquired of thee, and all the wealth of all the world is never enough, it's like drinking sea water, it just makes you more and more thirsty, it positively dehydrates you, it makes you ill, it makes you sick, ultimately you will die of it and there will be nothing to show for it, because no amount of simply taking in and taking in, this world's goods will ever be sufficient, but that which is even comparatively modest, which is received with thanksgiving, becomes somehow sufficient for all our needs, here and for the next day, and for as many days as we are still for, there is so much for which we have caused to give thanks, as I mentioned in prayer, politicians and so on, we have got an election coming up in December of course, and we think, oh my goodness, what a shout of dross, they all are, who are we going to vote for, and so on, and yet, and yet we are commanded in scripture,

I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peace of the life in all godliness and honesty, we don't often feel like giving thanks for politicians, but we ought to be thankful that we are governed in such a way as by and large ensures peace and stability in our land, even if we don't agree with most of their decisions or their policies or whatever, we have cause to give thanks that they are themselves constrained in such a system, that if they're voted out, that's the end of that, if governments change or governments rise and fall as they do over the decades, then that's just what they have to accept, nobody's going to call out the troops to force their own will onto people, nobody's going to start riots and burning down warehouses and schools and so on and bring the tanks onto the streets as they do in many countries, where there are electoral corruptions and vote rigging and all manner of disturbance, we are largely free of that, and that is also something for which to give thanks, we do not know how long we'll be spared for such stability or what the future holds, but we know, to use the old cliché, we know who holds the future, here it is who provides for us day by day, here it is who has provided for us year by year, what do you think happened to the twelve baskets of fragments that each of the disciples would have carried away and taken for next time or whatever it were, they would have eaten, they would have used that, and they would have gone, then they needed something else, but we don't actually read of the disciples starving at any point, between now and when

Jesus is taken up into heaven, not even afterwards, indeed he says to them at one point, he says, you know, when I sent you out without purse or script or shoes or money or anything to go and spread the good news about the kingdom, did you lack anything?

And they said, no, we didn't lack anything. They had everything they needed. And if our life, our self, our soul is devoted to the Lord, given to the Lord, then everything we receive, we receive

humbly with thanksgiving to the one who provides it and we find miraculously it is always sufficient for all of our needs.

[27 : 36] Now when that supply runs out, there will be another supply from somewhere else. We will never be the poorer for trusting in the Lord.

There will be, it's the old phrase to all this and heaven too. God is no man's better. And even our Lord in the days of his flesh behaved not as a mighty king who had the cosmos at his fingertips, although he did, but rather with all humility as one who received.

Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples and the disciples to them that were sent down. And likewise to the fishes as much as they would.

People came seeking Jesus because they had been fed after the Lord gave thanks. Verse 23, to the place where they had to eat bread after that the Lord had given thanks.

It is Christ's giving of thanks which is part and parcel of the miracle of provision that takes place.

And if we would be partakers of the miracle of Christ's grace and provision, we are told and taught what it is we should do.

[28 : 57] This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent. It doesn't just mean believe that he exists. James 2, verse 19, tells us the devil believes that God exists, but he trembles at that knowledge.

It's not enough to say when Jesus was living in front of him, so it's not just like, oh yeah, well Jesus, we believe that you exist. We believe that you may even be who you say you are, but this is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent, that you believe he is the Messiah, that you believe the truth of his own claims about himself.

What does God say about himself? What does God say about his son? Not what does the unbelieving world claim to know. What does the Lord say himself?

And then do you believe it? And if you believe it, then receive it. And if you receive it, receive it with thanks. And you will find that it is sufficient for your soul and sufficient for the needs of your body too, day by day and year by year until the very last one.

We have our example from Jesus and we have the miracle that he enacts likewise from Jesus into which miracle we are invited to be partakers and to share in the work of provision and of blessing and of multiplying of all the things that we have need of.

[30 : 35] He will provide if we will receive with thanks. again... there are things .. could you not let me there ever have an punch will do that?

I thought that don't want to